



OFFICIAL STUDY GUIDE 15th EDITION

COLLEGE-LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM



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English Composition

Description of the Examination

The English Composition examination measures the skills required in most first-year college composition courses. It measures the writing skills needed for college assignments and in particular for writing that explains, interprets, analyzes, presents, or supports a point of view. The examination does not cover some topics included in first-year college writing courses, such as research skills or literary analysis; nor does it require knowledge of grammatical terms as such. However, the student will need to apply the principles and conventions expected of academic writing discourse.

Two versions of the test are offered: an all multiple-choice version and a version with an essay. The multiple-choice version of the examination contains approximately 90 questions to be answered in 90 minutes. Some of these are pretest questions that will not be scored.

The version with the essay has two separately timed sections. Section I contains approximately 50 questions to be answered in 45 minutes. Some of these are pretest questions that will not be scored. Section II is comprised of one essay question to be answered in 45 minutes. In either version, any time candidates spend on tutorials or providing personal information is in addition to the actual testing time.

The essay is scored by college faculty who teach writing courses. Each essay is read and assigned a rating by two scorers; the sum of the two ratings is weighted and then combined with the candidate's multiple-choice score. The resulting combined score is reported as a scaled score between 20 and 80. Separate scores are not reported for the multiple-choice and essay sections.

Policies of colleges differ with regard to their acceptance of the two versions of the English Composition examination. Some grant credit only for the version with essay; others grant credit for either of the two versions. Many colleges grant six semester hours (or the equivalent) of credit toward satisfying a liberal arts or distribution requirement in English; others grant six credit hours of course credit for a specific first-year composition or English course that emphasizes expository writing.

Knowledge and Skills Required

The multiple-choice questions of the examination measure students' writing skills both at the sentence level and within the context of passages. The current examination in English Composition reflects a greater emphasis on revising work in progress than did previous forms of the test. The examination is designed so that average students who have completed the general education requirement in English composition can usually answer about half of the questions correctly.

Skills at the Sentence Level

The examination measures the candidate's awareness of a variety of logical, structural, and grammatical relationships within a sentence (these skills are tested by approximately 55 percent of the all-multiple-choice version and 30 percent of the multiple-choice questions in the version with essay). Questions test recognition of acceptable usage relating to:

- Sentence boundaries
- Economy and clarity of expression
- Concord/Agreement: subject-verb; verb tense; pronoun reference, shift, number
- Active/passive voice
- Diction and idiom
- Syntax: parallelism, coordination, subordination, dangling modifiers
- Sentence variety

Several kinds of question formats throughout the test measure these sentence-level skills:

Identifying Sentence Errors—This type of question appears in both versions of the exam. It requires the candidate to identify wording that violates the standard conventions of written discourse.

Improving Sentences—This type of question appears in both versions. It requires the candidate to choose the phrase, clause, or sentence that best conveys the intended meaning of the sentence.

Restructuring Sentences—This type of question appears only in the all-multiple-choice version. The candidate is given a sentence to reword in order to change emphasis or improve clarity. He or she then must choose from five options the phrase that would most likely appear in the new sentence.

Skills in Context

Questions in approximately 45 percent of the all-multiple-choice version and 20 percent of the version with essay measure recognition of the following in the context of works in progress or of published prose.

- Main idea, thesis
- Organization of ideas in the paragraph or essay
- Relevance of evidence, sufficiency of detail, levels of specificity
- Audience and purpose (effect on style, tone, language, or argument)
- Logic of argument (inductive, deductive reasoning)
- Coherence within and between paragraphs
- Rhetorical emphasis, effect
- Sustaining tense or point of view
- Sentence combining, sentence variety

The following kinds of questions measure writing skills in context:

Revising Work in Progress—This type of question appears in both versions of the exam. The candidate identifies ways to improve an early draft of an essay.

Analyzing Writing—Two prose passages written in very different modes appear only in the all-multiple-choice version. The candidate answers questions about each passage and about the strategies used by the author of each passage.

The Essay

This section comprises 50 percent of the version with essay. The student is expected to present a point of view in response to a topic and to support it with a logical argument and appropriate evidence. The essay must be typed on the computer.

Scoring the Essays

Shortly after each administration of the CLEP English Composition with Essay examination, college English faculty from throughout the country score the essays. Each essay is scored independently by two different readers, and the two scores are then combined. This score is weighted approximately equally with the score from the multiple-choice section, then combined with it to yield the reported score for the test.

Each reader awards an essay a score on a scale of 2 to 8; when the two independent scores are summed, the scale for the essay ranges from 4 to 16. In addition, a score of zero, which can be awarded only by the Scoring Leader (a faculty member who is a scoring expert), is given to off-topic essays and blank responses.

The college English teachers who score the essay expect that the writer has a command of English grammar and sentence structure and can use words precisely; they also expect that the essay will be organized, the ideas will be presented logically, and the examples will be pertinent. These are the basic requirements for the score of 5, which is the score in the middle of the scoring scale. If the essay writer fails in any of these important aspects of a good essay, then the essay is given a score below 5; if the essay does any of these very well or displays additional qualities of good writing, particularly a strong development of the argument, then the essay receives a score above 5.

Sample Test Questions

The following questions are provided to give an indication of the types of questions that appear on the English Composition examination. CLEP examinations are designed so that average students completing a course in the subject can usually answer about half the questions correctly.

Identifying Sentence Errors

Directions: The following sentences test your knowledge of grammar, usage, diction (choice of words), and idiom. Note that some sentences are correct, and no sentence contains more than one error.

You will find that the error, if there is one, is underlined and lettered. Assume that elements of the sentence that are not underlined are correct and cannot be changed. In choosing answers, follow the requirements of standard written English.

If there is an error, select the one underlined part that must be changed to make the sentence correct.

If there is no error, select answer (E).

Example:

SAMPLE ANSWER

(A) ● (C) (D) (E)

The other delegates and
A

him immediately accepted
B C

the resolution drafted by
D

the neutral states. No error
E

1. Hydroelectric dams work on a simple principle:
A

the greater the distance that the water has
B

to fall, the more the power that was generated.
C D

No error
E

2. Alexis has discovered that she can express her
A
creativity more freely through her sketches
B C
and not in her photography. No error
D E

3. Ms. Marco found that it was easier for her
teaching of children arithmetic once
A B
they had become familiar with the idea of
C D
a set. No error
E

4. The bill of the Australian platypus, which
consists of rubbery skin stretched over bone,
A
and is more sensitive than the bills of
B C
most other animals. No error
D E

5. Although a lottery may seem a relatively easy
A B
way for a state to increase revenues, they may
C D
encourage some individuals to gamble excessively. No error
E

6. Even when using a calculator, you must have
A
a basic understanding of mathematics if
B
one expects to solve complex problems
C
correctly. No error
D E

13. Astronomers have developed extremely sophisticated instruments which is helpful for measuring the properties of objects in space.

- (A) instruments, which is helpful for measuring the properties of objects in space
- (B) instruments to help measure the properties of objects in space
- (C) instruments, which are helpful for measurement of space objects' properties
- (D) instruments helpful to measure the properties of objects in space
- (E) instruments, a help for measuring the properties of objects in space

14. Foreign correspondents are like birds of passage, resting for a few weeks, then flying off again to a new place.

- (A) then flying off again
- (B) after which again they fly off
- (C) then they fly off again
- (D) when once again they fly off
- (E) but soon they are flying off again

15. Reducing individual taxes while eliminating as much waste as possible are traditional methods for increasing a nation's economy.

- (A) are traditional methods for increasing
- (B) is a traditional method for increasing
- (C) is a traditional method of stimulating
- (D) traditionally are methods for increasing
- (E) are traditional methods of stimulating

16. Arguably the most distinctive regional cuisine in the United States, the South is noted for such specialties as Brunswick stew and hush puppies.

- (A) the South is noted for such specialties as
- (B) the South has such specialties of note as
- (C) the South includes among its noteworthy specialties
- (D) southern cooking includes such noteworthy specialties as
- (E) southern cooking is including such specialties of note as

17. Phillis Wheatley arrived in North America at the age of eight, and she spoke English fluently by age ten and published her first poem when she was fourteen.

- (A) Phillis Wheatley arrived in North America at the age of eight, and she
- (B) When only eight, Phillis Wheatley arrived in North America, and she
- (C) Arriving in North America at the age of eight, Phillis Wheatley
- (D) Arriving in North America at the age of eight, but Phillis Wheatley
- (E) She was only eight when she arrived in North America, and Phillis Wheatley

18. Home computers themselves are becoming less expensive, but software, printers, and Internet access cause the total financial cost to rise up greatly.

- (A) cause the total financial cost to rise up greatly
- (B) greatly increase the total cost
- (C) highly inflate the cost totals
- (D) drive up the expense totally
- (E) totally add to the expense

19. Today's fashion designers must consider both how much a fabric costs and wearability.

- (A) wearability
- (B) is it going to wear well
- (C) if it has wearability
- (D) how well it wears
- (E) the fabric's ability to wear well

20. After traveling to Africa, the languages of Ghana became a special interest of Janet's.

- (A) the languages of Ghana became a special interest of Janet's
- (B) Janet became especially interested in the languages of Ghana
- (C) a special interest of Janet's became the languages of Ghana
- (D) Janet's special interest in Ghana's languages grew
- (E) Ghana's languages grew especially interesting to Janet

Revising Work in Progress

Directions: Each of the following selections is an early draft of a student essay in which the sentences have been numbered for easy reference. Some parts of the selections need to be changed.

Read each selection and then answer the questions that follow. Some questions are about particular sentences or parts of sentences and ask you to improve sentence structure and diction (word choice). In making these decisions, follow the conventions of standard written English. Other questions refer to the entire essay or parts of the essay and ask you to consider organization, development, and effectiveness of language in relation to purpose and audience.

Questions 21–25 are based on the following draft of a student essay.

(1) *I used to be convinced that people didn't actually win radio contests; I thought that the excited winners I heard were only actors.* (2) *Sure, people could win T-shirts.* (3) *They couldn't win anything of real value.*

(4) *I've always loved sports.* (5) *Unlike my friends, who fall asleep to "Top 40 Radio," I listen to "Sports Night with Dave Sims."* (6) *One night I heard Dave Sims announce a sports trivia contest with cash prizes of two thousand dollars.* (7) *I jump at the chance to combine my talk-show knowledge with everything my father had taught me about sports.* (8) *I sent in my self-addressed stamped envelope.* (9) *I forgot about the whole matter.* (10) *Then the questionnaire appeared in my mailbox ten days later.* (11) *Its arrival gave me a rude surprise.* (12) *Instead of sitting down and whipping through it, I trudged to libraries and spent hours digging for answers to such obscure questions as "Which NHL goalie holds the record for most career shutouts?"*

(13) *Finally, after days of double-checking answers, I mailed off my answer sheet, certain I would hear no more about the matter.* (14) *Certain, until two weeks later, I ripped open the envelope with the NBC peacock and read "Congratulations . . ."* (15) *I was a winner, a winner of more than a T-shirt.*

21. Which of the following is the best way to revise the underlined portions of sentences 2 and 3 (reproduced below) so that the two sentences are combined into one?

Sure, people could win T-shirts. They couldn't win anything of real value.

- (A) T-shirts, and they couldn't win
- (B) T-shirts, but they couldn't win
- (C) T-shirts, but not being able to win
- (D) T-shirts, so they do not win
- (E) T-shirts, while there was no winning

22. Which of the following sentences, if added after sentence 3, would best link the first paragraph with the rest of the essay?

- (A) I have held this opinion about contests for a long time.
- (B) The prizes offered did not inspire me to enter the contests.
- (C) However, I recently changed my opinion about these contests.
- (D) Usually the questions on these contests are really easy to answer.
- (E) Sometimes my friends try to convince me to enter such contests.

23. In the context of the second paragraph, which of the following is the best version of the underlined portion of sentence 7 (reproduced below)?

I jump at the chance to combine my talk-show knowledge with everything my father had taught me about sports.

- (A) (As it is now)
- (B) I jumped at the chance to combine
- (C) Having jumped at the chance to combine
- (D) Jumping at the chance and combining
- (E) Jumping at the chance by combining

24. Which of the following is the best way to revise and combine sentences 8 and 9 (reproduced below)?

I sent in my self-addressed stamped envelope. I forgot about the whole matter.

- (A) Having sent in my self-addressed stamped envelope, the whole matter was forgotten.
- (B) After sending in my self-addressed stamped envelope, the matter was wholly forgotten.
- (C) After my self-addressed stamped envelope was sent in, it was then that I forgot the whole matter.
- (D) After sending in my self-addressed stamped envelope, I forgot about the whole matter.
- (E) Forgetting about the whole matter after sending in my self-addressed stamped envelope.

25. All of the following strategies are used by the writer of the passage EXCEPT

- (A) using an informal tone
- (B) describing an experience to develop a point
- (C) criticizing those whose opinions differ from hers
- (D) building suspense by withholding the outcome until the end
- (E) disproving the assumption stated in the first sentence of the passage

Questions 26–30 are based on the following early draft of a letter to the editor of a local newspaper.

(1) *Our community needs more parks and play areas.* (2) *Living in a world where concrete surrounds us, it is important that we create places that are green and natural so that children can run and play.*

(3) *It is possible to do much with little expense to the city.* (4) *An abandoned lot can become a big patch of green grass ideal for running games.*

(5) *And buying expensive playground equipment and strange pieces of modern art for children to climb on is unnecessary.* (6) *Children will climb on anything if one lets them.* (7) *A large concrete pipe or an old truck with its wheels and doors removed makes an imaginative plaything.* (8) *Simply remove any part that may be breakable or unsafe, then paint the equipment with bright colors.* (9) *Bury the truck or pipe a foot or two deep so that it is stable.* (10) *Great opportunities for fun!* (11) *Children can play for hours, crawling through a secret tunnel or navigating to a distant planet.* (12) *Neighborhood committees could contribute other discards.*

(13) *We should do these things because children need oases in this concrete desert we live in.*

(14) *This may take time, but if people get together and contribute both ideas and labor, much can be completed successfully.*

26. Which of the following is the best way to revise the underlined portion of sentence 2 (reproduced below)?

Living in a world where concrete surrounds us, it is important that we create places that are green and natural so that children can run and play.

- (A) Living in a world where concrete surrounds us, the important thing is to
- (B) We live in a world where concrete surrounds us, it is important that we
- (C) Being surrounded by a world of concrete, it is important to
- (D) Surrounding us with a world of concrete, we need to
- (E) Surrounded by a world of concrete, we need to

27. Which of the following would best replace “And” at the beginning of sentence 5?

- (A) Furthermore,
- (B) Instead,
- (C) Despite this,
- (D) Nevertheless,
- (E) Excepting this,

28. The writer of the passage could best improve sentence 12 by

- (A) acknowledging drawbacks to the suggestions
- (B) providing specific examples
- (C) including personal opinions
- (D) discussing other community problems
- (E) defining the idea of a neighborhood

29. In context, the best phrase to replace “do these things” in sentence 13 is

- (A) accomplish our intentions
- (B) help these children
- (C) consider other options
- (D) build these play areas
- (E) have new ideas

30. Which is the best version of the underlined portion of sentence 14 (reproduced below)?

This may take time, but if people get together and contribute both ideas and labor, much can be completed successfully.

- (A) (as it is now)
- (B) and if people get together and they contribute
- (C) but if people will get together and they will also contribute
- (D) but if people get together and they would have contributed
- (E) however, if people get together, also contributing

Restructuring Sentences

Directions: Effective revision requires choosing among the many options available to a writer. The following questions test your ability to use these options effectively.

Revise each of the sentences below according to the directions that follow it. Some directions require you to change only part of the original sentence; others require you to change the entire sentence. You may need to omit or add certain words in constructing an acceptable revision, but you should keep the meaning of your revised sentence as close to the meaning of the original sentence as the directions permit. Your new sentence should follow the conventions of standard written English and should be clear and concise.

Look through answer choices A-E under each question for the exact word or phrase that is included in your revised sentence. If you have thought of a revision that does not include any of the words or phrases listed, try to revise the sentence again so that it does include the wording in one of the answer choices.

Examples:

I. Sentence: Owing to her political skill, Ms. French had many supporters.

Directions: Begin with Many people supported.

- (A) so
- (B) while
- (C) although
- (D) because
- (E) and

Your rephrased sentence will probably read: “Many people supported Ms. French because she was politically skillful.” This new sentence contains the correct answer: (D), “because.” None of the other choices will fit into an effective, grammatically correct sentence that retains the original meaning.

II. Sentence: Coming to the city as a young man, he found a job as a newspaper reporter.

Directions: Change Coming to He came.

- (A) and so he found
- (B) and found
- (C) and there he had found
- (D) and then finding
- (E) and had found

Your rephrased sentence will probably read: “He came to the city as a young man and found a job as a newspaper reporter.” This new sentence contains the correct answer: (B), “and found.”

31. Should Antarctica's average temperature ever rise ten degrees, the oceans of the world would drown out all low-lying coastal regions.

Begin with If Antarctica's average temperature rises.

- (A) should drown
- (B) will drown
- (C) will have drowned
- (D) will result in the drowning
- (E) drowning would be

32. Ms. Perry claimed that, because of special promotions by the airline industry, air travel has become "as American as apple pie."

Change that, because to that special.

- (A) industry, making
- (B) industry, which has made
- (C) industry had made
- (D) industry have made
- (E) industry, and they have made

33. Luther Burbank's development of an edible pitless plum was accomplished by crossing a pitless plum tree many times with standard varieties of plum trees.

Begin with Luther Burbank.

- (A) by many crossings
- (B) frequent crossings
- (C) by repeatedly crossing
- (D) plum was crossed many times
- (E) it was by repeated crossings

34. Most people who run in marathons have little expectation of being among the first to finish.

Begin with Few people.

- (A) lack expectation
- (B) expect to be
- (C) expect their being
- (D) have no expectation
- (E) have much to expect

35. The new ideas that influenced many American painters were brought to the United States in the 1940's by artists who left Europe during the war.

Begin with The artists.

- (A) and brought
- (B) ideas have been brought
- (C) war have brought
- (D) thus bringing
- (E) war brought

36. Posters, buttons, and balloons were considered by many campaign workers/fundraisers to be the most effective vote-getting devices.

Change were considered to considered.

- (A) balloons in the light of
- (B) balloons would be
- (C) balloons that
- (D) balloons the
- (E) balloons being the most

37. The reader is provided with an insightful and sometimes controversial analysis of African American perspectives on Reconstruction by W.E.B. Du Bois's books.

Begin with The books of W.E.B. Du Bois

- (A) provide the reader
- (B) have provided the reader
- (C) cause the reader to be provided
- (D) are responsible for providing the reader
- (E) provides the reader

38. Madeline's seemingly innocuous announcement caused considerable consternation among her students.

Change caused to but it caused.

- (A) announcement, and it seemed
- (B) announcement seemed
- (C) announcement which seemed
- (D) announcement, seemingly
- (E) announcement, despite seeming

39. When we consider how technology encroaches on our daily life, we can understand why many works of modern art are strident and fragmented.

Change we can understand to explains.

Your new sentence will begin with which of the following?

- (A) Technology encroaching
- (B) On account of technology's encroaching
- (C) The fact of technology's encroachment
- (D) Due to the encroachment of technology
- (E) The encroachment of technology

Analyzing Writing

Directions: Each of the following passages consists of numbered sentences. Because the passages are part of longer writing samples, they do not necessarily constitute a complete discussion of the issues presented.

Read each passage carefully and answer the questions that follow it. The questions test your awareness of a writer's purpose and of characteristics of prose that are important to good writing.

Questions 40–45 refer to the following paragraph.

(1) In Lovedu society, the individual was held to be inviolate. (2) The exercise of force of any kind, except in dealing with the very young infant, was never approved. (3) Even the courts of law refrained from executing their decisions, on the principle that to do so would be to coerce, and coercion should be avoided. (4) The parties involved in a case were expected to work out matters between them, aiming at a conciliatory solution and implementing the court decision through mutual agreement. (5) The culprit, if there was one, was left to pay restitution at his or her own pace. (6) Preferably, disputes were settled before they came to the point where they had to be submitted for a court decision. (7) If an individual wronged another, either deliberately or accidentally, it was the usual practice to send a conciliator to express regret and to offer a goat as a gesture of reconciliation. (8) This procedure was urged first of all, as the preferred solution, even when disagreements were brought to court. (9) Explicit condemnation was avoided as violating the individual, and as not leading to rehabilitation; punishment was seen as bad because it meant vengeful retribution.

40. Which of the following best describes the relationship of sentence 1 to the rest of the paragraph?

- (A) It establishes the organization for the paragraph as a whole.
- (B) It establishes the basis for comparisons later in the paragraph between one kind of society and another.
- (C) It demonstrates the writer's authority on the subject to be discussed in the paragraph.
- (D) It presents the principle on which the behavior described in the rest of the paragraph is based.
- (E) It describes the idea that will be refuted in the rest of the paragraph.

41. Which of the following best describes the function of sentence 4?

- (A) It indicates the procedure by which the court's decisions were carried out.
- (B) It demonstrates the laxness of the court in not executing its own decisions.
- (C) It gives an example of what can happen when the courts do not exercise common sense.
- (D) It alludes to the disorder that resulted from the court's decision.
- (E) It forces the reader to make an independent judgment about the issues in the case.

42. In sentence 5, the effect of using the expression "if there was one" is to

- (A) reveal the writer's uncertainty about the details of the sequence of events
- (B) emphasize the court decision mentioned in sentence 4 by referring back to it
- (C) reinforce the idea that assigning blame was not always important in the view of justice under discussion
- (D) suggest the carelessness inherent in this method of dealing with injustices
- (E) prepare the reader for the statement about court decisions in sentence 6

43. The function of sentence 7 is primarily to

- (A) illustrate the ineffectiveness of informal methods of dealing with conflict
- (B) present a specific incident that symbolizes the issues discussed in the paragraph
- (C) give an example to support the generalization in sentence 5
- (D) indicate the method by which the ideal described in sentence 6 would be realized
- (E) prepare for the suggestion in sentence 8 that most disputes eventually ended up in court

44. Which treatment of sentence 6 is most needed?

- (A) Leave it as it is.
- (B) It should be placed after sentence 7.
- (C) It should be omitted.
- (D) “Preferably” should be changed to “In any event”.
- (E) “Preferably, disputes were settled” should be changed to “Disputes were thus settled”.

45. The purpose of the paragraph is primarily to

- (A) tell the story of a society that is not well known
- (B) demonstrate the extremes of behavior arising from a specific idea
- (C) describe a particular system of social interactions
- (D) analyze the effects on society of dogmatic ideas
- (E) propose a change in methods of administering justice

Questions 46–50 refer to the following passage.

(1) Michael Goldman wrote in a poem, “When the Muse comes She doesn’t tell you to write;/She says get up for a minute, I’ve something to show you, stand here.” (2) What made me look up at that roadside tree?

(3) The road to Grundy, Virginia, is, as you might expect, a narrow scrawl scribbled all over the most improbably peaked and hunched mountains you ever saw. (4) The few people who live along the road also seem peaked and hunched. (5) But what on earth . . . ? (6) It was hot, sunny summer. (7) The road was just bending off sharply to the right. (8) I hadn’t seen a house in miles, and none was in sight. (9) At the apogee of the road’s curve grew an enormous oak, a massive bur oak 200 years old, 150 feet high, an oak whose lowest limb was beyond the span of the highest ladder. (10) I looked up; there were clothes spread all over the tree. (11) Red shirts, blue trousers, black pants, little baby smocks—they weren’t hung from branches. (12) They were outside, carefully spread, splayed as if to dry, on the outer leaves of the great oak’s crown. (13) Were there pillowcases, blankets? (14) I can’t remember. (15) There was a gay assortment of cotton underwear, yellow dresses, children’s green sweaters, plaid skirts. . . . (16) You know roads. (17) A bend comes and you take it, thoughtlessly, moving on. (18) I looked behind me for another split second, astonished; both sides of the tree’s canopy, clear to the top, bore clothes.

46. Which of the following best describes the relationship between the two paragraphs in this passage?

- (A) The second paragraph answers the question at the end of the first.
- (B) The second paragraph offers a concrete illustration of the quotation in the first.
- (C) The second paragraph takes an opposite point of view from the first.
- (D) The second paragraph generalizes about the quotation in the first.
- (E) The second paragraph is an elaborate contradiction of the thesis in the first.

47. Which of the following most accurately describes what happens in the second paragraph?
- (A) The speaker has a poetic vision symbolizing cleansing renewal.
 - (B) The speaker has a hallucination brought on by the heat.
 - (C) The speaker tries to explain how what was seen is possible.
 - (D) The speaker sees a tree full of flowers and imagines they are someone's washing.
 - (E) The speaker sees a large tree inexplicably covered with clothes spread to dry.
48. The descriptive details in sentences 9–15 provide a
- (A) precise visual image
 - (B) picture of something unearthly
 - (C) representation of a blur of color
 - (D) view from a child's perspective
 - (E) distorted sense of motion
49. Which of the following pairs of words best describes the speaker's reaction to the experience?
- (A) Ecstasy and fear
 - (B) Dismay and wonder
 - (C) Delight and fear
 - (D) Disgust and disbelief
 - (E) Wonder and delight
50. The main implication of the passage is that
- (A) you never know what you will see on country roads
 - (B) people are resourceful in finding ways to rise above domestic tasks
 - (C) inspiration or vision is often a matter of chance or caprice
 - (D) the poet sees more intensely than other people
 - (E) the Muse encourages only the eccentric to write

Sample Essays and Essay Topics

The section that follows includes directions as they appear in the test, as well as a sample essay topic and three essays that were written in response to the topic. Although the papers written by candidates are actually rated on a scale from 8 to 2, the three essays presented here have been assigned one of only three ratings — high, middle, or low — to illustrate the scoring process in simplified form. Rating these three papers can give you a sense of the general quality of the papers and of the scoring process. You should read the essays and use the criteria described on page 72 to assign a rating (high, middle, or low) to each one. Then compare these ratings with those given at the end of the essays.

Following the three sample essays are two additional essay topics that may be used to practice writing essays.

Directions: You will have 45 minutes to plan and write an essay on the topic specified. Read the topic carefully. You are expected to spend a few moments considering the topic and organizing your thoughts before you begin writing. *Do not write on a topic other than the one specified. An essay on a topic of your own choice is not acceptable.*

The essay is intended to give you an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to write effectively. Take care to express your thoughts on the topic clearly and to make them of interest to the reader. Be specific, using supporting examples whenever appropriate. Remember that how well you write is much more important than how much you write.

Sample Topic 1:

In describing the times of the French Revolution, Charles Dickens wrote: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” Think about how Dickens’ description might apply to today’s times. Write an essay in which you use specific examples to explain how today could be described as *both* the best of times and the worst of times.

Essay A

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” Charles Dickens wrote this phrase to describe the times of the French revolution. This concept not only applies to historic times, but also to the present.

It is true that we live in both the best and the worst of times even though there might possibly be a small number of people taking sides. People present arguments stating that we are in the best of times, better off than we have ever been. But again, there are those people on the opposite side saying we are not making any progress at all. What these people don’t realize is that they are both correct in their opinions. Perhaps we are better off than two-hundred years ago but aren’t making any progress to prove that point.

With each new day we discover more things and make more technological advances. These advances include such things as more powerful rockets, better agricultural methods, and cures for diseases once considered terminal. One very important improvement that these advances has caused is the increase in the number of opportunities open to both men and women. You can look all around and see the endless number of things women can and will accomplish in today’s society. The advances in our technology have also resulted in better wages for workers, not to mention better jobs, and, also, safety and efficiency in the many commodities of our everyday lives.

The times of today can also be termed the worst of times because of the many problems we face. We have heard so often of a shortage of one thing or another. We seem to be running out of the things that are vital to our existence. A major problem today is unemployment. Technology has introduced us to the robot age; thus, putting many laborers out of work. Many old people who grew up in “the olden days” often remark on the morals of today’s young people. Our parents and grandparents believe that children grew up properly when they were young because they had more discipline. This resulted not only in higher personal morals but also closer family bonds.

Today we live in a society where things are more efficient, safer, and much more convenient for our ease and comfort. In this aspect we exist in “the best of times”; but, perhaps, our struggle for improvement has also caused us to suffer the consequences. “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”

Essay B

The media and other attitude-shapers would have us believe that disaster is at our doorstep, the youth of this country have little faith that they will reach middle age, and millions of people all over the world are sick and starving. The general social mood today is one of pessimism, and yet is this really the worst of times? As Dickens so wisely observed, hope and despair can co-exist: the close of the twentieth century, just like the close of the eighteenth century, can as easily be called “the best of times” as “the worst of times.”

Clearly, the future of the U.S. looks bleak in comparison to its prosperous past. Most Americans lack faith in the very institutions that once formed the backbone of the nation: the family, the public school and government. While our tax dollars are funnelled into preparations for the most gruesome and permanent destruction ever conceived, millions of the world’s people are suffering for lack of food and medicine. Moreso than in any other period in history, the discrepancy between the standards of living of the rich and poor are staggering, and each day the gap grows wider. The impending doom of nuclear war, and the more immediate threat of poverty and starvation for millions all over the world in order to fuel the vision of destruction, create an impression that this is the worst of all possible worlds.

However, the prospects for curing today’s social ills are bright indeed, and the outcome of our collective nightmare may well be a united world dedicated to the health of the planet. In the breakdown of our institutions lies a change for a new order, and the types of organizations that replace the old in our lifetimes are likely to bring humanity to a greater achievement of our social values than have ever before been realized. The very technology that is currently being used for spoiling the rich and planning world disaster could just as easily serve all the world’s people, to meet the basic human needs of health, food, and shelter for all. Our era is one of revolution and immense progress in science and technology: this is a promise that if used wisely and with humanity, technology may help to bring about “the best of times.”

The creative solution to today’s world-wide problems lies not just in technology, but in the shared responsibility for the future of our race and our planet. To make these “the best of times,” it is our challenge to reverse the trends that threaten to destroy us. Increased participation by people united with this one purpose, all over the world, is a positive trend. The “best of times” are those in which all mankind sees the world as one, and every person becomes an active world citizen: creating “the best of times” is the greatest challenge of all times.

Essay C

Revolution means change and it can be in the best of time when it brings out the changes it needs.

In order to make a country great, the government must look to the social and economic upliftment of the people. Many people nowadays need jobs in order to get the necessary things in their life. If there will be a decrease in the percentage of unemployment, less problems will arise.

It is the best of time when everyone has a job, the elderly are taken care of, there is equal opportunity for every one, desegregation in school, no long lines in the social services, no big companies are closed and people are well-secured in their jobs.

Today could be the worst of time if many people could not have jobs. If the situation is like this, many people will have great problems. It is like in the French revolution when many people revolted against the government because they were discontented. They were discontented because they saw that only the upper class or the elite had the nice things in life.

Ratings by Evaluators:

Essay A — middle rating

Essay B — high rating

Essay C — low rating

High range (scores of 7–8) — Papers in this range are notable for their *high degree of competence and control*. An 8 paper demonstrates more consistent control than a 7. It usually is well organized and clearly focused, contains varied and appropriate detail, uses effective language and varied syntax, and demonstrates a mastery of grammar and mechanics.

Middle range (scores of 4–6) — Papers earning a score of 5 demonstrate *adequate competence*. While they are generally organized and without serious grammatical errors, the treatment of the topic may be superficial and the language and syntax unremarkable. The 6 papers demonstrate more control and more detail than 5 papers. The 4 papers, which usually contain somewhat more frequent lapses than 5 papers, still manage to develop the topic in a somewhat competent manner.

Low range (scores of 2–3) — Papers in this range demonstrate *clear deficiencies*. They often fail to focus on the topic; they are thinly developed; diction is immature and awkward; and errors abound in grammar, mechanics, and syntax. The paper earning a score of 2 either fails to develop the topic or contains such an accumulation of errors that meaning is seriously obscured.

Sample Topic 2:

The school board has proposed to alleviate a serious budget problem for next year by eliminating certain extracurricular activities. The board has proposed eliminating the marching band and foot-ball trips outside the immediate vicinity. Next year, in the event of continued tight budgets, the board will eliminate student newspapers and courses in drama, music, and art.

As a thoughtful and concerned citizen, write an essay setting forth your ideas on this subject. You may either support these budget cuts or oppose them. Draw upon your own educational experiences or those of your children, if you wish to do so. You need not know the details of school finance. For purposes of your essay you may invent some statistics and situations related to the school system that are appropriate to your argument.

Sample Topic 3:

Some people feel that studying “traditional” subjects such as history, sciences, and literature does not have much importance today. They believe that education should be directed toward a career and that the most significant studies in college are those that will help one earn a living in today’s society. As examples, they point to accounting courses, secretarial studies, electronics courses, and data processing courses.

Write an essay in which you support or refute this argument for career-oriented education. Be sure to give reasons for your opinion and to support those reasons with specific examples from your reading or experience.

Study Resources

Most textbooks used in college-level English Composition courses cover the topics in the outline given earlier, but the approaches to certain topics and the emphasis given to them may differ. To prepare for the English Composition exam, it is advisable to study one or more college textbooks, which can be found in most college bookstores. When selecting a textbook, check the table of contents against the “Knowledge and Skills Required” for this test.

To become aware of the processes and the principles involved in presenting your ideas logically and expressing them clearly and effectively, you should practice writing. Ideally, you should try writing on a variety of subjects and issues, starting with those you know best and care about most. Ask someone you know and respect to respond to what you write and to help you discover which parts of your writing communicate effectively and which parts need revision to make the meaning clear. You should also try to read the works of published writers in a wide range of subjects, paying particular attention to the ways in which they use language to express their meaning.

Additional suggestions for preparing for CLEP exams are given in “Preparing to Take CLEP Examinations.”

Answer Key

1.	D	26.	E
2.	D	27.	A
3.	A	28.	B
4.	B	29.	D
5.	D	30.	A
6.	C	31.	B
7.	B	32.	D
8.	A	33.	C
9.	E	34.	B
10.	C	35.	E
11.	C	36.	D
12.	B	37.	A
13.	B	38.	B
14.	A	39.	E
15.	C	40.	D
16.	D	41.	A
17.	C	42.	C
18.	B	43.	D
19.	D	44.	A
20.	B	45.	C
21.	B	46.	B
22.	C	47.	E
23.	B	48.	A
24.	D	49.	E
25.	C	50.	C